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# Woman's Union Missionary Society

## KASHEBA'S PLEA

This narrative, though not coming under the knowledge of our own missionaries, has been committed to us with a request for publication as a Leaflet. It illustrates most vividly those great evils of India—the social inferiority of woman, child-marriage, and enforced widowhood.

**O**N the western side of Hindostan, directly north of the Mahratta Province, where missionaries are laboring, is the province in which Kasheba lived.

This woman, like most women in India, had been married at the age of five years. Her husband was ten years old.

This girl's education and religious training had been left to her mother, who was accustomed to take her into the god-room, and show her how to present offerings, and then teach her how to pray for such things as wealth, male children, and that her next appearance upon earth might not be in some vile body; for the new birth of the Hindu is the returning after death in some other body—it may be a reptile, beast or bird. Kasheba and Doulutram, her husband, saw each other the day of the wedding, and met again but once until the age of twelve, when she was removed to the house of her mother-in-law. She was a beautiful girl, and notwithstanding the severity of the mother-in-law, did win her husband's love and affections, which she fully returned. Her amiable ways made her a favorite in the house.

When an event drew near on which her hopes for life-long happiness or misery largely depended, more than once each day she fell

down before "Mata," the great mother goddess, weeping and praying for the only gift which would render her worthy the respect of the family. She even employed a Brahmin to pray standing in the sacred river with water up to his neck half a day at a time; but all prayers were unavailing, for the baby was a girl. For two long months of ceremonial separation she was kept apart in a small damp room, having no sympathy, and not a visitor except the attendants who brought her food and gave her the attention necessary. Even her husband could only look at her through a grating, and in his anger and disappointment he did not care to do that.

When poor Kasheba was restored to her position in the family, she found even her husband took no delight in her. Before her little girl was a year old, plans were begun for her marriage, but the beautiful little Moti was not fully wedded until she was six years old, and in three years more the husband died of small-pox. When Kasheba heard of this she was almost frantic with grief, tearing her hair and beating her breast, crying, "My poor Moti—my lost child. I have no son, *only a girl, and she a widow.*" The most fearful of curses had fallen upon them, and the years of sorrow and abuse that followed can never be told.

When Moti arrived at the age of twelve years, priests had been called, and she was deprived of all her rights of caste and endearments of home. Her beautiful hair (the Hindu woman's pride) was shaven off, her handsome clothes exchanged for a coarse black wrapper, all her ornaments taken from her arms, neck, nose, ears and ankles. From that day forth, according to Hindu law, she must sleep on the ground, and be both slave and prisoner. Even the mother would be condemned if she manifested any tenderness and love to one whom the gods had cursed. Just at this time Doulutram the father, made the acquaintance of an English gentleman, who asked him if he would not be happy to invite his wife to

visit the ladies of his secluded family. Many excuses and delays were invented, but finally, after some years, the missionary lady found her way into the proud Brahmin's home. She was never allowed to see the hated Moti (who, after a time, found a way of escape, and chose a life of shame rather than endure the bondage of her father's house).

The poor mother, Kasheba, suffered trials in the introduction of a new wife, to whom were transferred the love, attentions, jewels, and fine clothes she had once delighted in.

But the two years of faithful instruction by the missionary had revealed to this poor, crushed, and yet noble-minded woman the truth that a woman had a soul, an immortal soul; even sinful woman may go to heaven, and that the way is provided by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Through trying experience and perils, Kasheba became a member of the missionary's family, and of the household of faith, and the following is part of Kasheba's letter to her husband, Doulutram, written from the Mission House :

“My husband will please receive my salutations. Through the mercy of God our Father I am well, and hope you are also. The reason of my writing you is this :

“I want you to know where I am, and that I am now baptized and a member of the Christian Church. It was not true what you told me, that the missionary when baptizing a convert whispers a charm into his ear, puts beef into his mouth, and then makes him drink wine; neither is it true that all the people are low-caste or outcast people; but whatever they were before, they are all very kind now and far happier among themselves than Hindus, and just for this reason they are holier and purer; nor was it true that I became a Christian in the hope of being married again.

“I am your lawful wife, and can never be anything else while we both live. I had no comfort while I was a Hindu and in my sorrow.

Now I have an Almighty Comforter, who is more precious to me than all of the wealth and friends of the world. I am not blaming you for saying those things, for perhaps you said them in ignorance, and even if you did not, I would not reproach you. My dear Saviour, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and shall I not be like Him? You offered me a thousand dollars and ornaments and honors if I would consent to forsake my Lord. I would not take a million of money, nor an ocean full of jewels, nor the crown of all India, and forsake Him. What! He gave His life for me and I barter His love and my soul for worldly treasures? Never! I am now one of His people, and I mean to serve Him with my whole heart while I live.

“Do not blame my friend, the missionary’s wife, for what I have done. She knew nothing of my resolve until it was carried out. She never advised me to run away from you, but to try and serve Christ in my own family; but I saw that I could not do that. I was sorry that I could not love you and your mother as Christians, but I love you still and shall never cease to pray that you may see the folly of worshipping idols and turn to the only true and living God.”

KASHEBA.

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KASHEBA’S LETTER TO CHRISTIAN WOMEN—SISTERS IN JESUS CHRIST.

Kasheba sends to you her Christian greeting. I am not worthy to address you I know, but I think you will not be angry with me. I am only a babe in Christ yet, but I hope to grow strong in faith by and by. I want to speak to all my Christian sisters in England, Scotland, Ireland and America. Now I know that all of these countries exist, and are full of Christ’s people. Of most of these countries I had never heard till my dear teachers told me of them. I suppose your children, even your little *girls*, know all about the countries of the world from their childhood. Happy for them that they are allowed to learn, and have good educated mothers to teach them from their infancy. Now, my dear sisters, why do not more good Christian women come to our country to teach heathen women about Jesus and His salvation? If you only knew their need as I know it, you would almost leave your husband, and

families, and home-work, and come at once. I see quite plainly that nothing but the knowledge of Christ will raise our native women from the deep ignorance and degradation in which they now live. Those of them who have met English women feel, as a Hindu lady said, like "ducks among swans;" they wonder what has made you superior to them. I know what has done it. It is your holy religion and Christian education, for I think wherever women enjoy these, men will not trample on them as they do in this country; but alas! our women are still without either. I am like one who has spent half a life in a vile prison, myself a prisoner. I have been among the prisoners, and have seen all the badness of their natures and of their daily actions, and the harshness and cruelty of their jailers, and if I had a thousand tongues and a thousand lives I would employ them all to deliver those unhappy prisoners. Will you not help to deliver them?

In my country is a tree called Simada; its root, branch, bark, leaf, flowers, seed, all are bitter; so sin, the bitter sap that flows through the heathen trees, has made all bitter and bad. Can you not change the bitter tree into a sweet one? The Word of God is the new sap needed for this, and you can carry it out to India in the pitcher of your hearts. Will you not do it? Again, I want you particularly to know that gentlemen (missionaries) cannot do much for our Hindu women. They are not allowed to enter Hindu houses and talk with the women. Christian work among our women must be done by women, and if they are doctors so much the better. *What can I now say to you*, for if the love of Jesus will not constrain you to pity the millions of our oppressed and ignorant country women, my poor words I am sure will be of little use.

You will not find our women rude or uncivil, but you will find them in a dreadful state of ignorance. Many of them are prejudiced and opposed to learning, but do not be discouraged. The same God who opened the door of my family, shone into my sorrowing heart and became my comforter, will open doors and shine into their hearts, and in his own time will turn all India from idols to serve Him and His dear Son. That the time may come quickly is the prayer of your redeemed sister.

KASHEBA.

This is the work of the missionaries of the *Woman's Union Missionary Society*, an independent organization of women. Since 1860 they have carried on a large zenana work in India. Its stations are Calcutta, Allahabad, Cawnpore and Jhansi.

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